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## PROFESSIONALIZING THE PRINCIPALSHIP

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The principalship is in the process of evolution and is even now passing into a new period of development. The previous levels may be designated as the head-teacher stage, the clerical stage, and the managerial or administrative stage, which latter is the one we are now leaving for another that is to be still higher, namely, that of professional leadership.

The growth of the principalship has been discussed more fully in a previous article.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is simply to present some of the evidence for the belief that the present tendency is toward professional ideals and standards. All of the material here presented was obtained through an investigation recently completed by the Seattle Principals' Association, information having been collected from city superintendents, university professors of education, and elementary-school principals in the city of Seattle.

1. Qualifications required of candidates for appointment to principalships, as well as customary bases for the promotion of principals in service, show a tendency to emphasize the professional aspects of the principalship.

The joint emphasis, shown in Table I, on cultural and professional training is noteworthy. These items appear to be overwhelmingly favored by the superintendents.

The figures in Table II are strikingly in accord with those of Table I. The predominance of the professional items in both the matter of selection and that of promotion is believed to be a reliable index of tendency and a condition that cannot fail to leave its impress upon the field of practice.

2. In general, principals in large city systems have been or are being freed from the burden of regular classroom instruction.

<sup>1</sup> Worth McClure, "The Functions of the Elementary-School Principal," *Elementary School Journal*, XXI (March, 1921), 500-514.

Table III shows that the day of the teaching principal is practically past, in so far as large systems are concerned. Comments by those answering the question show that it is the apparent aim to abolish the practice as rapidly as possible. In the case of nearly every city reporting that some principals were still required to teach, the parenthetical remark, "small schools only," was added. Some also noted that further relief was being planned.

TABLE I  
REQUISITES FOR APPOINTMENT TO PRINCIPALSHIPS—  
SEVENTEEN LARGE CITIES\*

Qualifications	Number of Times Checked
A.B. degree or equivalent.....	7
Advanced normal diploma.....	6
A.M. degree or equivalent.....	1
One-half year of graduate work.....	1
Examination in academic subjects.....	1
Experience.....	1
No definite requirements.....	1

\* Superintendents were asked to examine a list of requirements and check those items required.

TABLE II  
BASES FOR THE PROMOTION OF PRINCIPALS—  
TWENTY LARGE CITIES

Items Considered	Number of Times Checked
Success in improving instruction.....	18
Professional leadership in the system.....	16
Professional training.....	16
Length of service.....	14
Administrative ability.....	1
"Broad general culture".....	1
"Sympathetic attitude of helpfulness".....	1

When it is noted that in sixteen of the seventeen cities making returns upon this point nine-tenths of the principals are already freed from duty as classroom teachers, it will be seen how complete the change has already become.

It may be argued that considerations of management rather than of professional leadership have been the impelling causes. This may have been true at the outset. Nevertheless, when the facts just given are considered in connection with those of Tables IV

and V, it will be obvious that the present concept of the principalship carries with it considerably more than the functions of a purely managerial type.

TABLE III  
AMOUNT OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHING REQUIRED OF  
PRINCIPALS—SEVENTEEN LARGE CITIES

Number of Cities	Percentage Not Teaching	Percentage Teaching Half-Day	Percentage Teaching Full Day
10.....	100*	.....	.....
1.....	95	5	.....
1.....	95	.....	5
1.....	92	.....	8
1.....	90	10	.....
2.....	90	.....	10
1.....	45	50	5

\*Three cities included here noted that principals taught one class per day.

TABLE IV  
EXTENT OF CLERICAL HELP NOW FURNISHED—  
TWELVE CITIES\*

Approximate Percentage of Principals' Corps	Number of Cities Furnishing Aid
100.....	2
80.....	1
$66\frac{2}{3}$ .....	1
20.....	1
$12\frac{1}{2}$ .....	1
10.....	2
0.....	4

\* In addition to the twelve making specific answers, two replied, "practically all."

3. In addition to relief from teaching, clerical assistance is now frequently furnished to elementary-school principals. Of the fourteen cities making reply to this question, six may be said to have committed themselves to the policy of furnishing clerical help to principals, while four others are possibly making an experimental start. Granting that the six who did not answer failed to do so because their returns would have been negative, the data show a strong tendency of an initial character toward relieving the principal of routine duties.

This would indicate a prevailing conception that the principal's duties include functions of such great importance that it is poor economy to tie him to his office desk. It may be argued that these important functions are simply the larger administrative activities of the oversized school. This might be a plausible explanation if educational policies were actually drifting in the direction of gigantic school organizations. Table V, however, indicates that this is not the case.

4. The size of school recommended by superintendents of large cities as most advantageous educationally is an indication of the importance now coming to be attached to the professional functions of the principal.

TABLE V  
OPTIMUM SIZE OF SCHOOL, ACCORDING TO THE  
JUDGMENT OF SUPERINTENDENTS OF  
LARGE CITIES

Number of Pupils	Number of Times Mentioned
1,500 and over.....	2
1,400.....	2
1,000.....	6
1,000-800.....	1
900.....	1
800.....	1
800-600.....	1
600-500.....	2
Range.....	500-1,500+
Median.....	1,000

Table V shows clearly that oversized elementary schools are not in favor, since only four of the sixteen replies showed a preference for schools of more than 1,000 pupils. The desire is obviously not to make the principal merely the chief executive of a huge educational concern. A school of the size indicated is not so immense that the personality of the leader cannot be felt throughout the whole, but it is great enough to demand professional standards of accomplishment and leadership.

5. Many principals are now doing systematic professional study. Since the figures in Table VI are based upon estimates only, they are, of course, open to the possibility of inaccuracy.

They may be safely held, however, to show a decided professional attitude upon the part of many principals.

TABLE VI

PERCENTAGE OF PRINCIPALS' CORPS GIVING  
OUTSIDE TIME TO SYSTEMATIC PROFESSIONAL  
STUDY—SUPERINTENDENTS' ESTIMATES—TEN CITIES\*

Percentage of Corps	Number of Cities
90.....	1
80.....	1
75.....	1
75-50.....	1
50-40.....	2
25-20.....	4

\* In addition to the tabulated replies, one superintendent said, "practically all." One said, "many," and another answered, "very small."

The data given in Table VII serve to strengthen the conclusion that a great many principals strive continually to improve themselves by professional study. In this case nearly one-third of those reporting averaged an hour per school day devoted to such effort, in addition to carrying on regular school duties.

TABLE VII

OUTSIDE TIME DEVOTED TO PROFESSIONAL  
STUDY BY FORTY-THREE SEATTLE PRINCIPALS—WEEK OF MARCH 22-26, 1920\*

Number of Hours	Number of Principals
10.....	1
8.....	1
7.....	3
6.....	2
5.....	6
3.....	7
2.....	8
1.....	2
0.....	13

\*This was the week prior to the spring vacation, and the preparation of school entertainments, noted in several cases, may have influenced returns on this point.

It is interesting to consider the item of leadership in the profession as participated in by school principals. It was realized

that this would be difficult to measure as to extent, owing to lack of data. Superintendents were asked, however, to state whether any of their elementary-school principals had taken part in any of the following forms of professional leadership within the past five years: (a) contribution of articles to professional magazines, (b) participation in programs of state associations, etc. Table VIII summarizes the replies to this question.

TABLE VIII  
PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP OF PRINCIPALS—EIGHTEEN LARGE CITIES

Type of Answer	Magazine Articles	Participation in State Programs
Yes, often.....	4	3
Yes.....	8	12
Yes, seldom.....	1	2
No.....	1	1

That principals generally have begun to function as leaders in the profession is clearly to be inferred from Table VIII. Appearance upon the programs of professional associations appears to be the more common of the two activities. This no doubt accounts in part for the lack of a literature of the principalship.

As a check upon the data just given, it is timely to compare the reports of Seattle principals upon parallel items. The figures in Table IX seem to confirm the conclusion drawn from Table VIII. The extent to which the principals are members of the "study club" or small discussion group, meeting at regular intervals, is strongly indicative of professional vitality.

TABLE IX  
PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP OF FORTY-THREE SEATTLE PRINCIPALS

Activity	Number Reporting	Percentage
State programs.....	14	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ *
Magazine articles.....	17	40
Membership in study clubs..	27	63

\* One principal did not report definitely on this point.

A condition which has acted as a retarding factor in the professionalization of the principalship is the inadequacy of salaries,

making it practically impossible for large numbers of principals to take time off from regular service for the purpose of professional study. There is hope that this situation will improve, however, as indicated by Table X.

TABLE X

SALARIES SUGGESTED BY SUPERINTENDENTS AS ADEQUATE MAXIMA FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE CITIES AND BY UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS AS ADEQUATE MAXIMA FOR CITIES OF 300,000-500,000\*

Salary	Number of Times Mentioned by Superintendents	Number of Times Mentioned by University Professors
\$7,500.....	.....	1
5,000.....	1	2
4,500.....	.....	3
4,000.....	5	5
3,500.....	1	1
3,000.....	2	.....
Range.....	\$3,000-\$5,000	\$3,500-\$7,500
Median.....	\$4,000	\$4,250

\* Three other superintendents replied by merely stating the current salaries (1920) for their respective cities, namely, \$4,250, \$4,000, and \$3,000. Another stated that principals were then asking \$3,900.

6. Salaries show a tendency to increase to the point where continued professional study is possible and where superintendents will be able to demand it of their principals. Table X does not picture actual conditions, of course. Nevertheless, it indicates the general acceptance by superintendents, as well as university men, of a professional basis for the erection of salary schedules. Herein it shows the trend of the times.

7. The relation of principals to courses of study implies a high degree of recognition of the professional status of the principalship. As shown in Table XI, the principal appears to have considerable leeway as regards academic courses of study, and not so much where the so-called "special" subjects are concerned. It is true that he does not have entire independence, but he clearly possesses the right of initiating changes and modifications, which is the crux of the matter. The recognition of this right by superintendents implies the admission of the principal to the status of professional expertness.



8. The increasing responsibility of the principal as a community leader brings to the front another of his functions that is upon a plane higher than that of mere business managership. This responsibility is being emphasized particularly by the predominating practice in large cities of appointing a principal for each building, rather than a supervisory principal for several buildings. Returns from twenty cities show that only three employed supervisory principals, as just defined, while seventeen appointed a principal for every school. It is of further interest and significance that, of the three cities reporting supervisory principals, one announced a discontinuance of the policy after the school year of 1919-20, one said that only two were employed to look after small schools, and one qualified the affirmative answer by the words, "a few." Practice thus tends to emphasize the principal's responsibility to his community by limiting it to a single unit.

TABLE XI

THE PRINCIPAL'S RELATION TO THE COURSES OF STUDY—TWENTY LARGE CITIES

Question	Yes	Yes, Indirectly	Yes, in Conference	Yes, Limited	Total Yes	No	Not Answered
Has the principal a voice in formulating:							
Academic course of study?..	19	.....	.....	.....	19	1	.....
Special course of study?....	4	5	.....	.....	9	9	2
Has the principal authority to modify:							
Academic course of study?..	6	.....	6	6	18	.....	2
Special course of study?....	2	.....	10	3	15	4	1

9. The tendency among principals is to recognize their responsibility to their communities more keenly. Twelve out of fifteen superintendents answering stated that the majority of their principals appeared to recognize the importance of being educational leaders in their respective communities. Thirty-one out of forty-three Seattle principals stated that they were co-operating with at least one community organization; eighteen, with two organizations; five, with as many as five such organizations. Such figures are too indefinite, of course, to show more than the general tendency, but they seem to do this with considerable clearness.

## SUMMARY

The tendency to elevate the office of principal to the plane of professional leadership is emphasized in the following ways:

1. Higher standards of training are being required of candidates for appointment.

2. In determining promotions, superintendents place the chief emphasis upon the professional items, namely, success in improving instruction, professional leadership in the system, and professional training.

3. In the larger cities, principals are practically all freed from the duty of regular classroom work.

4. The tendency in city systems is toward relieving the principal of clerical and routine duties.

5. The optimum size of school (1,000 pupils) recommended by superintendents is not large enough to subordinate professional leadership to administrative duties, while it is of sufficient size to demand professional abilities and ideals.

6. The professional vitality of large numbers of principals is a significant condition.

7. The recognition of the professional basis as the proper one for the erection of salary schedules justifies the hope that salary provisions will eventually make continuous professional improvement feasible for all principals.

8. The relation of the principal to the courses of study admits him to recognition as an educational expert.

9. The responsibility of the principal as an educational leader in the community is being recognized by both superintendents and principals.